

REMARKS

In the Final Office Action mailed on August 16, 2004 (paper no 10) the Examiner rejected claims 1-80 under 35 U.S.C. § 101; rejected claims 1-80 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph; and rejected claims 1-2, 7-16, 26-34, 41-42, 44-48, 60-75 and 77-80 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) over U.S. Patent No. 5,557,686 to Brown et al. ("Brown").

To clarify the subject matter for which they seek protection, applicants herein amend claims 1, 29, 36-40, and 59; and cancel claims 3, 7-28, 35, and 64-80. As a result, claims 1, 2, 4-6, 29-34, and 36-63 are presently pending. As discussed in detail below, applicants submit that each of these claims is now in condition for allowance.

Applicants would like to thank the Examiner for the consideration shown during the telephone interview conducted on October 4, 2004, during which the Examiner and applicants' representative discussed amendments that would place the claims in condition for allowance. With respect to independent claim 1, the Examiner indicated that amending claim 1 as herein to explicitly recite classifying groups of users would overcome the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §§ 101 and 112, first paragraph. The Examiner further indicated that amending claim 1 as herein to incorporate the language of claim 3 into claim 1 would overcome the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b). In view of these amendments, applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw the rejections pending against claim 1, and its remaining dependent claims 2 and 4-6.

With regard to independent claim 29, the Examiner indicated that incorporating the language of claim 35 into claim 29 would overcome the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 101, § 112, first paragraph, and § 102(b). In view of this amendment, applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw the rejections pending against claim 29, as well as its remaining dependent claims 30-34 and 36-58.

While the Examiner and applicants' representative did not discuss claim 59, applicants note that it is very similar to claim 29. Based upon this similarity, applicants submit that an amendment to claim 59 that mirrors the amendment to claim 29 discussed above should similarly overcome the rejections of claim 59 under 35 U.S.C. § 101, § 112, second paragraph, and § 102(b). If the Examiner does not concur, applicants respectfully request that the Examiner promptly contact applicants' representative to make alternative arrangements. Otherwise, applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw the rejections pending against claim 59 and its dependent claims 60-63.

With the exception of claim 59 and its dependents discussed above, applicants have cancelled claims not discussed during the telephone interview. Accordingly, based upon the agreement reached during the telephone interview, applicants submit that the pending claims are now all in condition for allowance, and respectfully request a prompt notice of allowance.

If the Examiner has any questions, or believes that examination of the application would be advanced by a further telephone interview, he is encouraged to contact the undersigned at (206) 359-6373.

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Respectfully submitted,
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